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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet presents a program for training volunteer paraprofessionals in behavioral reinforcement in the classroom. The paraprofessional is to assist the teacher in providing individual attention, enhancing the learning climate, helping the individual child realize his potential and increase feeling of selfworth, and making learning a positive experience. The pamphlet explicates the various steps in such a training program, and has some comments on the program's success in the Santa Ana area. (NG)

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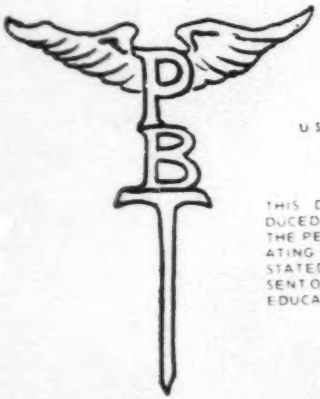
PBT

POTENTIAL BUILDING TECHNIQUE

A VOLUNTEER PARA—PROFESSIONAL FOR THE CLASSROOM



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WHAT IS A PBT?

The PBT is a volunteer paraprofessional who cares for children. He cares enough to communicate this caring to each child in the classroom on a one-to-one basis. The one-to-one interpersonal contact between child and PBT is the key element to the success of this program. It elicits warm feelings in the child and attests to his potential to be successful in his day-to-day class activities, both in academic work and in social behavior.

A PBT can be a high school student, a college student, a parent, a retired person, or anyone else who cares for children. He works under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher and receives guidance and direction from a school psychologist.

The PBT works from one to two hours a day, five days a week, from four to six weeks. Upon completion of a four to six week program as a PBT, the school will respond in recommendation form to any inquiring agent, if requested, about the accomplishments of the PBT in question.

WHAT THE PBT IS NOT!

The PBT is not a teacher's aide, a tutor, a disciplinarian, or a clerk. He has been trained in specific skills and his total function is to apply these skills while in the classroom.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE PBT PROGRAM?

- To assist the classroom teacher in her attempt to bring individual attention and instruction to each child in the class.

- To enhance the motivation and learning climate of the class by focusing on the individual success of each child.

- To help each child realize his potential for achievement.

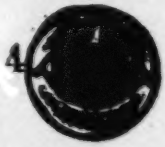
- To increase each child's feeling of self-worth by recognizing his successes.

- To make learning a positive experience.

WHAT DOES THE PBT DO?

The PBT uses proven principles of learning, such as positive reinforcement, modeling and shaping. The PBT reinforces behavior considered acceptable by the teacher, either in the area of academics or social behavior.

After a two-hour preliminary training session, the PBT meets the principal and the teacher at the school where he will be working. Then he spends one to two hours observing in the classroom. During this time of observation he becomes familiar with what is considered acceptable behavior by the teacher, begins to learn the children's names and determines the routine of the class. After this period of observation, the PBT is ready to begin his term in the classroom.



The process of reinforcement just described, as it applies to the PBT program, can be summarized as follows:

Look for acceptable behavior.

Approach the child.

Touch the child in a firm and warm manner.

Look the child squarely in the eyes.

Tell the child EXACTLY, in behavioral terms, what he is doing correctly. Say the child's name first, describe and praise his behavior and emphasize that HE did it.

Mark a slash in a square on the Work Record Card for each reinforcement. This becomes a visual reminder of the child's success.

By the above process of *touch*, *look*, *tell* and *mark*, it can be seen that the child becomes aware of his successes in three different ways: (1) touch, (2) auditorily (verbal praise), and (3) visually (colored marks).

WHY HAVE A PBT PROGRAM IN THE CLASSROOM?

It is the belief of those involved with the PBT program that the "average" child, the child with no special educational problems, is easily forgotten when it comes to special programs in education. In contrast, there have been an abundance of programs designed to alleviate isolated problems in the classroom. The PBT program is an attempt to reach this "middle group" of children who, for the most part, try hard, do their work and behave within acceptable limits, but who receive too little credit for their efforts because the teacher simply does not have enough time. The end result of this is a lessened interest in learning and in school in general. The PBT program is designed to help *all* students in the class, not just the problem child, by recognizing their successes and thereby increasing their motivation to learn.

The PBT becomes an extension of the teacher and is able to do many of the things the conscientious teacher would like to do, knows she should do, but cannot because of a lack of time and energy.

Evaluation Sheet

Each PBT must fill out an Evaluation Sheet which includes the following:

Initial impression of the class. This is based on the observation period. It might include the atmosphere of the class or the children's behavior; however, it is the PBT's own personal impressions and may include anything he wishes.

Innovations. After the PBT has been in the classroom for two weeks, a conference is held with the teacher, PBT and trainer. This conference is held to consider certain children who might benefit from the use of innovative and more individual help. This might include behavioral contracts, the use of token reinforcement, special reinforcers and others. No more than five minutes should be spent with one child when giving individual help. Innovations are of secondary importance when compared to the PBT's primary task of positively reinforcing acceptable behavior of *all* children in the class.

Concluding impressions. The PBT writes a short statement of his concluding impressions, of the class and of the completed PBT program. This can be in comparison to his initial impressions of the class. Also, and of great importance, the teacher is asked to measure the success of the program through a written, narrative evaluation at the end of the program. In addition to this, the teacher fills out a rating scale on a pre-post measurement basis. The teacher rates two basic things: (1) motivation toward learning, and (2) attitude toward social behavior.

Progress Chart

Each child in the class also has a Progress Chart. This is a graph of day-to-day progress as transferred from the Work Record Card.

Acceptable Behavior

The teacher is the professional in the classroom and thus the PBT must look to her when determining what is, and what is not, acceptable behavior.

During observation, and once the term has started, he PBT must be aware of what the teacher expects from each child, both in academics and in social behavior. Cues as to what is acceptable in social behavior might be taken from the posted rules (if any).

Positive Reinforcement

Reinforcement strengthens the behavior it follows. Thus, if we see a child engaging in acceptable behavior, and we reinforce that behavior, it is more likely to be repeated than if we ignore it. This is what learning is all about!

The PBT uses basically only two of the infinite types of reinforcement available. One is a tangible reinforcement, that is, a mark on the Work Record Card. This mark *by itself* means little or nothing to the child. Thus, we pair this mark with a social reinforcement, in this case, a warm touch and a positive comment about what the child has done. *The importance of the touch and the positive comment cannot be overemphasized.* The manner in which the PBT expresses these two cues of success and approval oftentimes makes the difference between a "so-so" PBT term and a successful term. If the PBT combines his qualities of caring, warmth and concern with the touch and praise, he is most certain to be a big success.

Daily he:

Signs in.

Checks with the teacher about the day's activities.

Passes out the Work Record Cards and Progress Charts.

Looks for children displaying acceptable behavior.

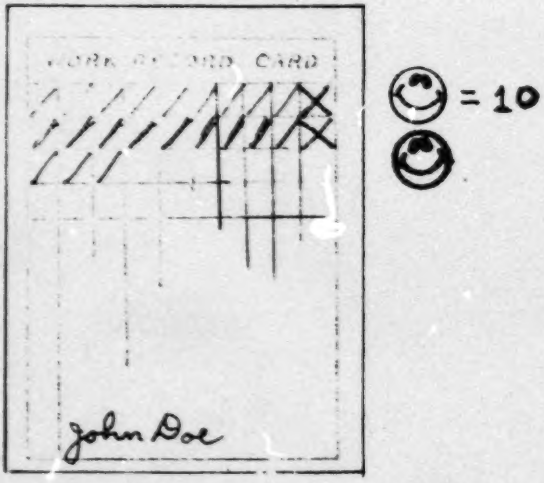
Uses appropriate techniques to positively reinforce the children.

Collects the Work Record Cards and Progress Charts.

Transfers marks from Work Record Cards to the Progress Charts.

Work Record Card

Each child in the class will have his own Work Record Card. This is a 5" x 5" card with 100 checking spaces. For young children, a card of 50 checking spaces is used.



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Marking Color Code Sequence

There is a daily color code sequence for the Work Record Card and Progress Card markings (felt pen):

Monday	*red*
Tuesday	*blue*
Wednesday	*black*
Thursday	*orange*
Friday	*green*

When each row on the Word Record Card is filled, mark an "X" in the last square of the row, turn the card over and stamp a happy face. Each time a child successfully fills a card, he is strongly reinforced with praise, both verbally and in writing on the back of the card. The card is then sent home with the child to show to his parents. A new card of a different color is then given to the child in accordance with the designated color sequence, as given by the trainer.

Attendance

The PBT must sign in at an appointed place each day before going to the classroom. Regular attendance is of vital importance to the success of the program. Absences become a big disappointment to the children and add discontinuity to the program. In the event of an absence, it is requested that the PBT make prior notification by phone.

HAS IT WORKED?

This program has been used in Santa Ana, Huntington Beach, San Bernardino and Simi Valley during the past three years with great success. The program was developed by Bayard Bartley, a school psychologist for the Santa Ana Unified School District. Mr. Bartley has this to say about the program:

> *The results of the program have been encouraging. The students enjoy the personal contact of a person paying attention to their efforts. When the awareness of success within the individual student seeps down to the home level, the parents express satisfaction in that their child seems to enjoy school more.*
>
> *Principals express satisfaction with the program in simply asking for more PBT's.*
>
> *The teachers have written in their narrative evaluations of the program that the PBT has been a much needed direct help to them. In addition to this, many of the teachers have expressed confidence that they can carry on with the PBT program themselves after having seen how it works in their classroom.*
>
> *The rating scale results, which are supplied by the teacher, in percentages of improvement, comparing the pre-test with the post-test, yields the following data:*
>
> a. *Regarding motivation toward learning, a 30% improvement is noted in considering all of the PBT programs implemented.*
>
> b. *Regarding attitude toward social behavior, a 40% improvement is measured.*